



State of Connecticut
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE F. CAFERO, JR.
ONE HUNDRED FORTY-SECOND DISTRICT

REPUBLICAN LEADER

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
SUITE 4200
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106
TELEPHONE
CAPITOL: (860) 240-8700
TOLL FREE: 1-800-842-1423
FAX: (860) 240-0184

Good afternoon Chairmen Gaffey and Fleishmann, Ranking Members Caligiuri and Giuliano, and Members of the Education Committee. Today, I am here to testify in support of Raised Bill 6494, An Act Concerning Teen Dating Violence Education.

First, let me take the opportunity to thank the Education Committee for raising this bill. Teen dating violence is a harsh reality in our nation, and while we may sit here today in this public hearing thinking this is not a problem in Connecticut, or in our communities, ladies and gentlemen, I am sad to say that it is a very real problem right here in our state. Let me put this into perspective for you- According to the Connecticut Department of Public Health, 13% of teens surveyed reported they were involved in physical dating violence incidents. In fact, Connecticut ranks 9th in the nation among states that report teen dating violence. This is not a statistic that neither I, nor any of you should be proud of.

In my town, students involved with the Center for Youth Leadership at Brien McMahon High School have worked on the Peace Project, aimed at bringing teen dating violence awareness to their classmates and their community. The students work along with PeaceWorks, an educational project of the Domestic Violence Crisis Center that offers tools that help pre-kindergarten to twelfth grade students that help them recognize and reduce aggression, anti-social behavior, bullying, harassment and intolerance.

At the high school level, PeaceWorks offers an extensive curriculum for educators to implement in their classrooms including lessons on identifying communication styles, personal boundaries, personal security, and elements of healthy decision making. The curriculum materials include objectives that students will learn; concepts and skills required to carry out the objectives; and the amount of time needed to implement the lesson in the classroom. The materials PeaceWorks developed for the teen dating violence education was done in collaboration with several highly-regarded educational organizations, including the Wellesly College Center for Research on Women, the University of Connecticut's NEAG School of Education, The Family Violence Prevention Fund, Educators for Social Responsibility, and the Southern Poverty Law Center's Teaching Tolerance Curriculum.

OVER

Now, more than ever we are all aware of the difficulties our cities and towns are facing in this uneasy economic climate. I am, however, encouraged by the good work done by PeaceWorks in creating this curriculum. I hope that through our legislative efforts, other communities might choose to take advantage of this curriculum in efforts to curb teen dating violence. I would encourage this teen dating violence curriculum be made available to our towns to be used within their current curriculum plan in order to build a more comprehensive violence prevention program into their existing plans.

Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to speak before you today. I am available to take any questions you might have at this time.